Divine Word International Journal of Management and Humanities 4(3)(2025) 1816-1844

Research in Management and Humanities

DWIJMH VOL. 4 NO. 3 (2025) ISSN: 2980-4817

Available online at www.dwijmh.org
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Examining the role of ethical leadership and employee treatment in enhancing organizational commitment: Educational context

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ARTICLEINFO

Article history:
Received: June 15, 2025
Received in rev. form. July 15, 2025
Accepted: August 15, 2025
Published: September 10, 2025

Keywords: ***organizational commitment, ethical leadership, employee treatment***

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to examine the influence of ethical leadership and employee treatment on the employees' organizational commitment. To deepen the concept of the study, literatures were reviewed. The study applied descriptive assessment and a correlation research design. The study population consisted of all employees of the institution where the study was conducted. To gather the data, validated research questionnaires were utilized. To analyze the data, inferential statistics were used. The study found no correlation between ethical leadership and organizational commitment, as well as between employee treatment and organizational commitment. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. The study recommends further study to include more variables that consider the specific context of the institution.

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JEL Classification: M14

Introduction

Managing an organisation requires a comprehensive understanding of not only the various tasks the organisation undertakes but also of human motivation, particularly strategies for motivating employees to love their work and the organisation (Vo et al., 2022). The purpose of motivation is not only to inspire employees to enjoy their work but also to encourage them to commit to it (Kunz, 2020; Uka & Prendi, 2021). A commonly used method to motivate employees is financial rewards, but nowadays the success of such a strategy depends not only on the individual persons but also on the context. While monetary reward is a standard method, its effectiveness is increasingly recognized as context-dependent, not solely reliant on individual characteristics (Churintr, 2010). It must be acknowledged that not everyone works solely for financial gain and high pay, and that not all places and cultures prioritize money. While economic incentives are a significant factor, many people also find

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meaning, purpose, and social connection through their work independent of monetary reward. Furthermore, cultural values play a crucial role in shaping how work is perceived and valued, with some cultures placing a higher emphasis on factors beyond financial gain (Noon & Blyton, 1997; Mejia, 2023; Figueiredo et al, 2023).

Motivation is a multidimensional approach in the sense that it does not rely on a single factor, such as financial rewards; instead, various factors may motivate employees. While money is important, it is not the only element; other factors, such as intrinsic elements (job satisfaction and personal growth), work environment, leadership style, and treatment, also play important roles (Jovanovic & Matejevic, 2014). Those elements contribute to overall employee well-being and commitment, which impact performance (Davidescu et al, 2020; Aljumah, 2023). Recent developments indicate that ethical leadership also serves as a motivating factor for employees' performance. Ethical leaders foster trust, cultivate a positive organizational culture, and inspire employees to adopt ethical behaviors, ultimately leading to increased satisfaction, organizational commitment, and productivity (Li et al., 2023; Alhaidan, 2024). Besides ethical leadership, employee treatment is also recognized as a key motivational strategy. Favorable employee treatment, encompassing factors such as fair compensation, recognition, a supportive work environment, and growth opportunities, can significantly impact employee motivation, satisfaction, and ultimately their performance and commitment (Sypniewska et al., 2023; Elamalki et al., 2024).

Recognizing the importance of ethical leadership and employee treatment in motivating employees to commit to the organization, this research is pursued. Based on the literature review, minimal studies have been conducted to investigate the effect of ethical leadership and employee treatment on organizational commitment. The study is divided into several parts. The first part is the introduction that explains the background of the study. The second part is the literature review, which examines the study's concepts in relation to existing literature and studies. The third part presents the research methodology, which includes the research design, population, study locale, research procedures, ethical review, research instruments, and statistical treatment of data. The fourth part is the data presentation and analysis, which presents the data about the statement of the problem. The fifth part is the results and discussion, which further discuss the findings, implications, and conclusions.

Literature review

A brief review of ethical leadership and the discussion of its dimensions

Achieving high organizational performance requires not only knowledge, skills, and substantial financial capital but also ethical behavior or ethical leadership (Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2025; Abun et al., 2023; Saleem et al., 2024). Yukl et al. (2013) argued that to be effective, a leader must demonstrate ethical leadership behavior in addition to task-oriented, relationship-oriented, and change-oriented leadership behaviors. However, scholars have differing opinions about what constitutes ethical leadership. Its definition and the dimensions to be measured vary from one author to another. For example, Kanungo (2001) argued that ethical leaders engage in ethical behavior that considers its positive effect on others, which allows them to avoid behaviors that cause harm to others. The concept is driven by the accepted belief that ethical behavior is driven by its benefits for followers, the organization, and society (Kalshoven et al., 2011). The act is moral if the results benefit the majority for the greater good. Brown et al. (2005) suggested that ethical leadership is a combination of integrity, adherence to ethical standards, and fair treatment of employees. An act must be based on moral norms and have good benefits for others, including employees. Kanungo (2001) and Aronson (2001) pointed out that a significant concern of ethical leadership is the effect of their behaviors on others. Brown et al. (2005) suggested that an ethical leader must behave morally appropriately in dealing with others, which can be demonstrated through good conduct, effective communication, and sound decision-making. Brown et al. (2005) and Treviño et al. (2003) emphasized that leaders must serve as role models for their followers and promote ethical behavior in the organization by rewarding employees' ethical behavior. Followers will behave similarly to their leader through imitation and observational learning. Ethical behaviors are expected to have a positive effect on employees' behavior, which consequently results in positive organizational performance (Treviño et al, 2003).

The varying definitions of ethical leadership lead to confusion regarding the dimensions of ethical leadership that should be measured. Different authors present different ideas. De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008) and De Hoogh et al. (2011) suggested that ethical leadership is a multidimensional construct. Initially, De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008) identified only three dimensions, namely fairness, power sharing, and role clarification. Then, De Hoogh et al. (2011) developed seven

dimensions. Four additional dimensions are people-oriented behavior, integrity, ethical guidance, and concern for sustainability. These dimensions are explained by Brown et al (2005). The first dimension is *fairness.*
An ethical leader treats others fairly and has no favouritism. The second is *power sharing*. An ethical leader will allow subordinates to participate in decision-making, listen to their ideas and concerns, and empower employees to make decisions independently related to work problems (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2009; Resick et al., 2006). The third dimension of ethical leadership is *role clarification*. An ethical leader clarifies responsibilities, expectations, and performance goals so that followers are clear about what is expected of them. The fourth dimension is *people orientation*. An ethical leader shows concern for people. This fourth dimension was confirmed or strengthened by the study of Treviño, et al. (2003), and Kanungo & Conger, (1993) when they interviewed people to describe an ethical leader and people pointed out that an ethical leader is a person who is concerned for people which is shown through caring, respecting, supporting subordinates and ensuring their needs are met. The fifth dimension is *ethical guidance.* A leader must communicate and explain ethical or moral values to people, and reward those who demonstrate ethical behavior. The sixth dimension is *integrity.* It suggests that an ethical leader must align words and actions. Yukl (2006) pointed out that an ethical leader keeps his/her promises and behaves consistently. The seventh dimension is a *concern for sustainability,* which recommends that an ethical leader protect the environment and encourages people to recycle materials to help preserve it. These multidimensional measures suggest that ethical leadership encompasses not only traits or character, such as integrity and honesty, but also efforts to educate subordinates on how to behave ethically. Wulumbawa et al (2008) offered different dimensions of ethical leadership. In their study on authentic leadership, four dimensions were identified: *self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspectives, and balanced processing.* Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) identified five dimensions, which include *altruism, organizational stewardship, persuasive mapping, wisdom, and emotional healing*. The overlapping dimensions presented by different authors lead to the loss of focus on which dimensions are related to ethical leadership.

Yukl, (2011) criticized those dimensions proposed by De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008), Brown, et.al (2005) and Kalshoven, et al (2011) by pointing out that there are only three dimensions that are relevant to measuring ethical leadership which are fairness, integrity and ethical guidance, while others are not relevant to measure ethical leadership. Although the four dimensions identified in the authentic leadership measurement by Wulumbawa et al. (2008) are present, only two dimensions are relevant to measuring ethical leadership: internalized moral perspective and relational transparency. An internalized moral perspective means internal moral standards and personal moral values guide a leader's behavior. Relational transparency refers to a leader who accurately reveals their values and beliefs (Yukl et al., 2011). Concerning the dimensions proposed by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), Yukl et al. (2013) noted that only one dimension in their proposed scale is relevant to ethical leadership, specifically altruism, while the other three dimensions are not relevant to measuring ethical leadership.

Furthermore, Yukl et al. (2013) attributed the prior Theory and research on ethical leadership as the primary cause of the conceptual confusion regarding the scope of the ethical leadership construct domain and the appropriate way to measure it. According to Yukl, et.al (2013), the most important dimensions that are relevant to ethical leadership are (a) honesty and integrity (including consistency of actions with espoused values), (b) behavior intended to communicate or enforce ethical standards, (c) fairness in decisions and the distribution of rewards (no favouritism or use of rewards to motivate improper behavior), and (d) behavior that shows kindness, compassion, and concern for the needs and feelings of others (rather than attempts to manipulate, abuse, and exploit others for personal gain). Based on the review of the different dimensions of ethical leadership presented in different studies (ethical leadership survey of Treviño, et al., (2003), ethical leadership work questionnaires or ELWQ of De Hoogh & Den Hartog (2008), Kalshoven, et al. (2011), authentic leadership questionnaires of Wulumbawa, 2008, servant leadership questionnaires of Barbuto and Wheeler, 2006, and perceived leadership integrity survey or PLIS), Yukl, et.al. (2013) developed ethical leadership questionnaires (ELQ) which contain 10 items that describe ethical leadership. The 10 items represent honesty, integrity, fairness, altruism, consistency of behavior with espoused values, communication of ethical values, and providing ethical guidance, which have been identified in various studies. Yukl (2013) developed ELQ as a *unidimensional* construct, rather than a multidimensional one, as recommended by various researchers. From the original 10 items, the number was reduced to 8, which we use in the current research.

Based on the evaluation of the current researcher concerning the several dimensions of ethical leadership presented by Kalshoven, et. al, (2011), Wulumbawa, (2008), Barbuto & Wheeler, (2006), Craig and Gustafson (1998), the current researcher agrees with the Yukl, et. al., (2013) that other dimensions of ethical leadership are not relevant to measuring ethical

leadership, except honesty, integrity, fairness, altruism, consistency of behavior with espoused values, communication of ethical values, and providing ethical guidance which was all found those studies. Therefore, the current study adopts the *unidimensional* ethical leadership questionnaires developed by Yukl et al. (2013).

The influence of ethical leadership on the performance

Numerous studies have been conducted to examine the impact of ethical leadership on various organizational outcomes. For instance, Bhatti et al. (2021) investigated the impact of ethical leadership on project success, examining the mediating roles of trust and knowledge sharing. The study suggests that ethical leadership influences trust and knowledge sharing, which, in turn, impacts the project's success. Ashfaq et al. (2021) and Chinwe et al. (2017) present related findings on the impact of ethical leadership on employee work engagement and commitment. Their study confirmed that ethical leadership has a positive impact on work engagement, with self-efficacy and organizational commitment serving as mediating factors. The results of such a study indicate that ethical leadership does not work alone to affect work engagement, but rather it must be accompanied by self-efficacy and organizational commitment. Thus, Malik, et.al (2016), Nauman and Qamar (2018), Qing, et al., (2019), Yozgat and Mesikiran (2016), Kim and Brymer (2011), and Guo (2022) recommended ethical leadership as a preferred leadership style while at the same time develop self-efficacy and organizational commitment to improving job satisfaction, employee performance, productivity and organizational commitment. Rantika and Yustina (2017) argued that ethical leadership is highly beneficial for enhancing employees' well-being and psychological empowerment.

The above findings suggest that the absence of ethical leadership may lead to job dissatisfaction, which in turn negatively affects organizational outcomes. Several studies have pointed out the negative impact of poor leadership on organizations. Schyns and Schilling (2013) found that employees' destructive leadership and counterproductive behavior are associated with unethical leadership. The study indicated that the more destructive the leadership style is, the more counterproductive the behavior of employees becomes. It produces adverse outcomes for the organization, its employees, and stakeholders, as suggested by Shen & Lei (2022), Sypniewska (2020), and Bagyo (2018). Kilic and Gunsel (2019) specifically indicated the adverse effect of counterproductive behavior on job dissatisfaction, which diminishes employee engagement and performance.

Employee treatment

Under employee treatment, three key topics need to be discussed: workers' rights, respect in the workplace, and fostering caring relationships.

Treatment along with workers' rights under the Labor Code of the Philippines

The Cambridge Dictionary defines treatment as "the way you deal with or behave toward someone or something. "This is also the definition offered by Collins Dictionary, that treatment is 'the manner of handling or dealing with a person or a thing". Related to our topic of investigation, treatment refers to how school management or administrators treat their employees. The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has written laws, known as the Labor Code of the Philippines, that set guidelines on how management should treat employees. It prescribes workers' rights, management prerogative, and a dialogue mechanism between labour and management (CBA). Under the Labour Code of the Philippines, the government still recognizes management prerogatives, which may include hiring, firing, promotion or demotion, laying off, setting policies, discipline, determining working hours, and establishing working structures. The management has the prerogative power to hire and fire employees who do not meet employment standards, promote or demote employees who meet or do not meet the standards, terminate employees, discipline employees, and determine working hours and work structure. However, in the exercise of these management prerogatives, the management should not violate the workers' rights. By instituting management prerogatives and workers' rights, the government balances the power between labor and capital or management (Jimenez, n.d.). In the event of a conflict between labour and management, the Philippine labour code provides a mechanism known as a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), through which labour, represented by its representatives, and management representatives can discuss their differences and reach an agreement.

Under the Labour Code of the Philippines, workers' rights include security of tenure, self-organization, collective bargaining, just and humane conditions of work, strike/concerted effort, participation in decision making, share in the fruits of the

production, living wage, labour standards, and CBA rights (Jimenez, n.d). These rights are derived from Article XIII of the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, which addresses Human Rights and Social Justice (GOVPH, 1987). These are the rules or laws that guide management on how to deal with their employees, and violating these rules is considered a serious offense. Security of Tenure recognizes that, although management has the prerogative power, every employee should be assured of security in the sense that they cannot be dismissed from work at any time without cause or authorized cause, and this can only be done after following due process, such as an investigation. This right is found in Article 294 of the Labor Code, entitled "Security of Tenure." It states that the "employer shall not terminate the services of an employee except for just cause or when authorized" (Jimenez, 2002; Calayag, 2018). After securing tenure, labour also has the right to self-organization, which means that employees have the right to join, assist, and form a labour organization for collective bargaining and/or for mutual aid and protection (Jimenez, n.d.). The right to self-organization is found in the Republic Act, No. 875, Section 3 (Republic of the Philippines, 1953). The Constitution also empowers employees with the right to bargain. Jimenez and Jimenez (n.d., 2002) contended that a result of the right to self-organization is the right to collective bargaining, in which employees have the power to negotiate with management for better terms and conditions of employment. This right is written in R.A. 875, Sections 12-14.

Under the Labour Code, employees also have the right to work in humane conditions. Management should ensure that employees' working conditions are humane and just. This right includes the right to equal pay for equal work. Through the Department of Labour and Employment, the government of the Philippines has set the standards for minimum wage, working hours, holiday pay, overtime pay, night differential, service incentive leave, service charge, separation pay, 13th-month pay, maternity benefits, paternity benefits, social security system, employee compensation commission, Philhealth, and Pag-Ibig. These are aimed at protecting the workers from exploitation (Jimenez, 2002; Busto, 2013). In addition to the right to humane working conditions, employees also have the right to strike and participate in decision-making processes. Employees who are under legitimate labour organizations have the right to strike to strengthen their bargaining power. The 1987 Constitution also guarantees that employees have the right to participate in decision-making related to matters that involve their rights, interests, benefits, and welfare (Jimenez, n.d.; Busto, 2013). Furthermore, the Constitution, as reflected in the Labour Code of the Philippines, also provides standards for a living wage. The wage should be commensurate with the living standards in a particular region.

The last two workers' rights concern a share of the fruits of production and full employment, as well as equality of employment opportunities. These rights remind management that labourers have the right to be given shares in the fruits of productivity, particularly incremental productivity resulting from the extra effort of the workforce (Jimenez, 2002). The 1972 Constitution also provides a basis for employees to claim their rights to full employment and equality of employment opportunity, which was incorporated into the Labour Code of the Philippines. Under this law, any form of discrimination is illegal (Jimenez, n.d, Busto, 2013).

Implementing the workers' rights specified in the Labor Code is considered the legal and moral foundation for the employer's treatment of employees. It refers to the legal and normative standards of employer behavior toward employees. These kinds of treatment can be considered fair treatment. This is what matters to employees. They are concerned about how they are treated in their workplace, and fair treatment can affect employees' well-being, not only economically but also psychologically (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Hassan, 2012). Studies have shown that fair treatment toward employees can improve their trust in management, job satisfaction, and work engagement, as well as their intrinsic motivation, and prevent employees from leaving the company (Choi, 2011; Kim & Rubyanti, 2011; Rubin, 2011, as cited by Hassan, 2012).

Respect in the workplace

People are raised in a culture that teaches them to respect others regardless of their identity, and to extend that respect to all living and non-living things, including the environment, because everything is interconnected (Dillon, 2022; Burdon, 2020). Society teaches respect for animals because they can feel pleasure and pain (Singer, 1974, as cited in Cochrane, n.d.), and encourages the protection of sentient beings precisely because they can experience suffering (Gomez-Galan, 2025). These beings are respected not for their usefulness, but because they possess inherent value (Regan, 1983). Regan (1983), as cited in Cochrane (n.d.), asserts that any being that is a “subject of a life” has intrinsic worth, even if it serves no human purpose.

The call to respect primarily applies to humans since it is rooted in the idea of human dignity—each individual has inherent worth (Andorno, 2013). Respect is seen as a moral law or categorical imperative that all humans are obliged to uphold, and disregarding it is viewed as immoral (Ross, 2009). This stems from the principle of humanity, which holds that humans are distinct because they can act rationally and pursue their own goals (Johnson, 2016). This principle emphasizes that people should never be treated merely as a means to an end, but always as ends in themselves. It does not forbid cooperation, but warns against reducing others to tools for personal gain (Johnson, 2016).

Ultimately, this principle promotes humane treatment. Humans are not objects; they have dignity and deserve respect (Roughley, 2024; Roughley & Bayertz, 2019). Kant also held that all persons are owed respect because they are rational, free beings with dignity and are ends in themselves (Dillon, 2018).

The Catholic Church has been placing human Dignity as the foundation of all its social teaching. It views human beings as possessing inherent Dignity as persons because they are created in the image and likeness of God (Müller, 2020). Dignity is independent of race, gender, age, religion, colour, or ability. It is based on the belief that God creates human beings and therefore all human beings possess the same Dignity. Therefore, no human dignity should be compromised (Calderón Gómez, 2024). It is based on this teaching that the Catholic Church calls for social actions that can restore human Dignity through its activities promoting integral human development (Development & Peace, 2000). The social actions of the Catholic Church are born out of respect for human Dignity. The Church has the moral responsibility to respect and restore human Dignity. Respect is not because the Church wants to respect its people, but because it is its moral obligation to respect and restore human Dignity as created beings. It is a categorical imperative to respect without condition, not because the Church wants to do so, but because the Church must do so.

Studies on human respect in the workplace and its impact on job satisfaction have been conducted. Edery (2017) examines the impact of organizational respect on job satisfaction in the human services. The study found that respect in the workplace is a key predictor of employee job satisfaction. This finding is also confirmed by Gurchiek (2016), Ghaffari and Burgoyne (2017), Boafo (2018), and Brooks (2018), who have all found that respect in the workplace is positively associated with job satisfaction. Specifically, the studies suggested that respectful treatment of all employees at all levels in the workplace is a crucial factor in job satisfaction. Their study again reinforced the previous findings of other studies, which suggest that verbal abuse and perceived respect in the workplace are significant predictors of job satisfaction and improved well-being. Negative workplace interactions have a detrimental impact on employee satisfaction and mental health (Shin et al., 2021; Boafo, 2018; Shoorideh et al., 2021).

Caring relationships in the workplace

The philosophical and moral foundation of caring relationships in the workplace is the ethics of care, which was initially developed by Noddings (1984). It is an ethical theory that argues that moral actions should be based on interpersonal relationships (Staudt, 2016). A specific action is good or bad based on caring norms. Although initially an approach to education, the ethics of care was later developed and applied to various fields of life, including at home and in the workplace, to emphasize that caring is the moral foundation of a relationship (Ley, 2023; Chadha-Shridhar, 2023). For Noddings (1984), a caring relationship is a fundamental aspect of education, the moral foundation of teaching, and the basis for student-teacher relations. The teacher is the carer, and the student is cared for. Her ethics of care should be applied not only to student-teacher relationships, but it should also to any kind of relationship, including the workplace. Management's decision should be based on caring (Smith, 2020). Noddings argued that care is fundamental to human life because all human beings desire to be cared for (Noddings, 2002, cited by Smith, 2020). In caring, there is sympathy. Burton (2015) defined sympathy as a feeling of care and concern for someone, often someone close, accompanied by a wish to see him/her better off or happier. In this case, the carer is deeply involved in the situation of the cared-for and joins the feelings of the cared-for to help them escape their troubled situation (Pettersen, 2011; McAuliffe, 2023). To feel what the cared-for is feeling, the carer must be receptive or open to what the cared-for is revealing or saying. Through listening, the carer can react in a way that is helpful for the cared-for, and only then does the cared-for feel that they are cared for by the carer (Smith, 2020).

In workplace relationships, the manager serves as the caregiver, and the employee is the cared-for. Using the concept of Noddings (1984, 2002), the basis for action and decision-making of the carer must be caring for the cared-for or the employees (Ley, 2023; Au & Stephens, 2023). Management must demonstrate compassion and concern for the well-being of employees, empathize with their feelings, and respond to their needs (Akgun et al., 2025; Ramachandran et al., 2023). Through caring, management shows sympathy for employees and responds in a way that helps them become better off. The study by Eldor and Shoshani (2016) on the caring relationship between school staff and teachers' work engagement found that compassion expressed by colleagues and principals towards teachers is positively correlated with organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Houston (2020), as cited in Moynihan and Pandey (2008) and Hodson (2004), argued that positive interaction in the workplace can improve job satisfaction and prevent turnover. When employees feel supported by their leader or management, they are more likely to be loyal to the company (Kou, 2012). Tran et al. (2018) also found that high-quality workplace relationships improve employee job performance and commitment, and also lower job stress. Earlier, Barsade and O'Neill (2014) conducted a study to determine whether employees who are loved perform better. Their study found that, indeed, an employee who is loved performs better. Rosanne (2014) argued that it is all about relationships. She pointed out that relationship-based care is a successful model for any organization. Caring indicates that management is kind-hearted, shows compassion toward partners or employees, and is generous in the sense that the leader or management invests time, energy, and effort in reaching out to employees or the work team (Brenner, 2017). The Mental Health Foundation (2016) highlighted several benefits of caring relationships in the workplace, including job satisfaction, reduced turnover, and a more positive and productive work environment. Such an environment can have a positive impact on the mental health of employees and, consequently, reduce absenteeism. Management and coworkers should be able to identify when employees or colleagues are doing well and intervene to offer assistance (Mosquera & Soares, 2025).

Organizational commitment

The concept of commitment and organizational commitment may vary among researchers. The dictionary alone has different definitions of commitment. For example, the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defines commitment as "the willingness to give your time and energy to a job, activity, or something that you believe in. "While Dictionary.com, which originated from Oxford Languages, defines it as "the state or quality of being dedicated to a cause, activity, or an engagement or obligation that restricts freedom of action". The two definitions refer to commitment as a dedication of time and energy to a cause or activity that someone believes in. It signifies a strong sense of responsibility and loyalty to a particular purpose or organization (Stark et al., 2025). The Britannica Dictionary defines commitment as "a promise to do or give something or a promise to be loyal to someone or something."

Reading and analyzing those definitions reveals that they lack the psychological dimensions of commitment, which is one of the essential elements of commitment. The definition that includes psychological elements can be found in the definitions provided by various scholars. Leonard (2009) defines commitment as "a state of mind that holds people and organizations in line with behavior. Commitment involves dedicating time and energy to an activity while also forming a psychological contract with the institution (Ngobeni et al., 2020; Prakash et al., 2021). Psychological forces bind an individual to an action. Employees are dedicating their time and energy to the institution due to their emotional attachment to the organization. Ajayi and Muraina (2016) argued that it is the extent to which an individual identifies himself/herself with the object of the organization in which they work. Ceylan (2020) claimed that it is about giving one's time and interest by taking responsibility for one's wishes and beliefs for the person, organization, or work one is affiliated with. All these definitions emphasize three important characteristics of commitment: a loyal relationship with the organization due to emotional attachment, self-identification with the organization, and dedicating time and interest to the organization (Stark et al., 2025). These definitions emphasize the emotional aspect of the commitment, specifically the emotional attachment that the person has to the organization.

The emotional element of commitment is defined by Meyer and Allen (1991) as a psychological state that (a) characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization and (b) has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization. This definition is similar to that of Porter et al. (1974), who view organizational commitment as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (p. 604). From these two definitions, there is a consensus among scholars to view organizational commitment from a psychological perspective, as Idris and Manganaro (2017) do, who consider organizational commitment to be the extent to which individuals

psychologically identify with their work organization. Porter and Lawler (1965), as cited by Herrera and Heras-Rosas (2021), viewed organizational commitment as the desire of employees to make a high effort for the good of the institution and to be loyal and committed to its objectives and values. In short, Greenberg and Baron (2008) recognized commitment as the degree to which employees identify with the organization where they work and the extent to which they show commitment to the organization.

In summary, organizational commitment refers to the psychological contract between an individual and an organization. Rousseau (1995) argued that a psychological contract is the set of individual beliefs a person holds about the reciprocal obligations and benefits established in an exchange relationship. It is a result of an exchange relationship that conditions the behavior of the employees and the organization. In the exchange relationship between the employee and the organization, two dimensions have been identified: a relational contract and a transactional contract (MacNeil, 1985). In the relational contract, there is an emotional exchange and loyalty due to certain expectations, such as a promotion and a permanent position being given to the employee (Golperwar, 2015). An employee develops a psychological contract with the organization because they believe that, in exchange for their loyalty, they will be rewarded. At the same time, the transactional contract is motivated by an economic exchange (Rousseau, 1995). As long as the salary and benefits align with expectations, the employee will likely remain with the organization.

Concerning the effect of organizational commitment on individual behavior, studies have been conducted. Fischer and Mansell (2009), Mathieu and Zajac (1990), Meyer et al. (2002), and Solinger et al (2008) have investigated the effect of organizational commitment on occupational commitment, job satisfaction, and job involvement. Their studies yield the same findings: organizational commitment has a strong correlation with occupational commitment, job satisfaction, and job involvement. Employees with a higher level of organizational commitment are less likely to leave the organization, have a lower absenteeism rate, and tend to exhibit organizational citizenship behavior and improved well-being (Angle & Perry, 1981; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002; Solinger et al., 2008).

Dimensions of organizational commitment: Affective, continuance, and normative commitment

Based on the definition of organizational commitment, scholars agree that it is not a single or unidimensional construct, but rather a multidimensional construct (Mueller et al., 2020; Allen & Meyer, 1990). They agreed that organizational commitment is composed of more than one dimension, which includes attitudinal, behavioral, and motivational dimensions. Morrow (1993) identified two dimensions of organizational commitment: attitude (cognitive and affective) and behavior. Miller (2003) understood attitude as an evaluative judgment concerning a phenomenon, whether it is positive or negative. It reflects feelings of attachment, identification, and loyalty to the organization as the object of commitment (Morrow, 1993). This view is supported by Meyer et al. (1990), who noted that an attitude is a favorable cognitive and affective judgment about an organization, which is always reflected in behavior (Ajzen, 1993). Best (1994) argued that organizational commitment is evident in individuals who are dedicated to performing their tasks effectively. As Reicher (1985) noted, organizational commitment is visible when organizational members are committed to the existing group within the organization. There is a psychological bond between the members and the group as a whole, which is evident through each member's active participation in the group's programs and activities. This is well described by O'Reilly (1989), who notes that organizational commitment is a form of psychological bond demonstrated through a sense of job involvement, loyalty, and beliefs in the organization's values. The psychological bond is evident in employees' acceptance of organizational goals and their willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization (Miller & Lee, 2001).

Emanating from the concept of organizational commitment, scholars have proposed multidimensional dimensions of organizational commitment; however, these dimensions often overlap with those proposed by other scholars. For example, Meyer and Allen (1997) proposed three dimensions of organizational commitment, namely affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective commitment is viewed as an employee's perceived emotional attachment to their organization. An employee develops an emotional attachment to an organization because they find a match between their values and priorities, which are compatible with the company's values and mission (Lowry, 1973). This is a crucial element in sustaining employees' active involvement in supporting the organization. According to Johnson and Chang (2006),

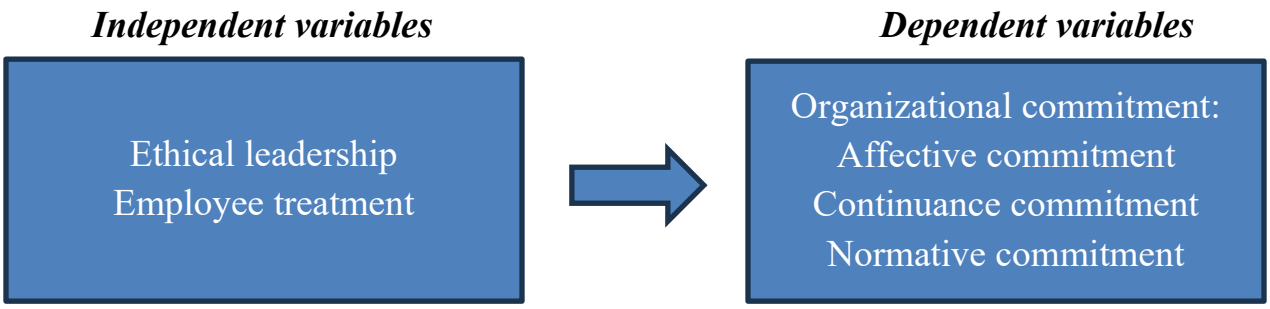
employees with high affective commitment tend to exert more effort for the benefit of the organization. This is evidenced by the studies of Becker et al. (1996) and Meyer et al. (2004). The results of their study suggested that affective commitment enhances the intrinsic motivation of employees and a strong personal desire to remain loyal to the organization.

The second element is continuance commitment. It occurs after someone weighs up the pros and cons of leaving the institution. Someone decides to continue the employment relationship because they believe it is more advantageous to stay with the institution than to leave. This kind of commitment is driven by a cost-benefit analysis, which includes the perceived loss of personal investment and limited employment alternatives after leaving the institution (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1984). In this case, employees choose to remain loyal to the institution because it offers them more benefits than leaving. They maintain their relationship with the organization because of certain benefits (Becker, 1960). The third element is normative commitment. It refers to one's sense of obligation to one's organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Loyalty to the organization is a matter of moral and legal obligation. This type of loyalty is typically derived from the employment contract. Muhammad, Afridi, Ali, Shah, and Alasan (2021) pointed out that when an employee believes it is morally and legally correct to remain with the institution, they will stay.

O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) identify three dimensions of commitment, namely compliance, identification, and internalization. Identification and internalization capture the concept of affective commitment, as defined by Meyer and Allen (1997), which refers to the emotional attachment of the person to the organization, encompassing a sense of belonging and a valuation of its goals. Compliance refers to the relationship between employee contribution and extrinsic rewards. This dimension can be incorporated into the continuance commitment, as presented by Meyer and Allen (1997), in which an employee chooses to stay due to economic considerations. Similar to all dimensions pointed out by Meyer and Allen (1997), O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) are also noted by Balfour and Wechsler (1996). He identifies three dimensions of organizational commitment, namely identification, affiliation, and exchange. Identification represents an individual sense of pride in the organization, which represents the affective dimensions. Affiliation also describes a sense of belongingness and attachment to coworkers and the organization. It describes the affective dimension of commitment as pointed out by Meyer and Allen (1997). Exchange commitment occurs when an individual feels that the institution recognizes his/her effort in terms of benefits. This represents the continuance commitment as indicated by Meyer and Allen (1997).

The three dimensions that are presented by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) and Wechsler and Balfour (1996) are captured by the three dimensions identified by Meyer and Allen (1997). Therefore, this paper adopts the three dimensions of Meyer and Allen (1997) as the basis for investigating affective organizational commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment.

Conceptual framework



Source: Yukl, et al. (2013), Meyer and Allen (1997), Abun, et al (2020)

Figure 1: The conceptual framework reflects the content of the study. It aims to investigate the impact of ethical leadership and employee treatment on organizational commitment.

Statement of the problems

The study aimed to investigate the impact of ethical leadership and employee treatment on employee organizational commitment. It specifically seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of ethical leadership of administrators?
2. What is the level of employees' perception of the treatment?
3. What is the level of employees' organizational commitment?
4. Is there a relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment?
5. Is there a relationship between employee treatment and organizational commitment?

Hypothesis

Leadership style is a significant contributing factor to employee performance, and the same is true for treatment (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2014; Gede & Huluka, 2024). The current study seeks to investigate the effect of ethical leadership and employee treatment on organizational commitment. Thus, the study hypothesizes that ethical leadership and employee treatment are associated with organizational commitment.

Scope and delimitation of the study

The study limits its investigation and coverage to the effect of ethical leadership and employee treatment on organizational commitment, along with three dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. The study focuses solely on Divine Word College of Laoag.

Research methodology

The study is a quantitative study and thus, it utilizes a descriptive assessment and correlational research design. The locale and population of the study refer to the institutions where the researcher is working. The study employs questionnaires to gather data, utilizing both descriptive and inferential statistics. Therefore, it employs the weighted mean and ANOVA to analyze and determine the relationship between the variables. During the data collection process, the researcher sent a letter to the President requesting permission to distribute the questionnaires. The data collection was then conducted through the employees' representatives. The researcher also considered the ethical review, and since the research does not involve sensitive human issues, the ethical review was waived.

The following ranges of values with their descriptive interpretation will be used:

Statistical Range	***Descriptive Interpretation***
4.21-5.00	*Strongly Agree/Very High*
3.41-4.20	*Agree/High*
2.61-3.40	*Somewhat Agree/Moderate*
1.81-2.60	*Disagree/Low*
1.00-1.80	*Strongly Disagree/Very Low*

Data presentation and analysis

This part presents the data gathered through research questionnaires analyzed using SPSS, and the presentation follows the statement of the problems.

Problem 1: What is the level of ethical leadership of administrators?

Table 1: Level of ethical leadership of administrators

Indicators	**Mean**	**DR**
1. Shows a strong concern for ethical and moral values	3.75	A/H
2. Communicates clear ethical standards for members.	3.73	A/H
3. Sets an example of ethical behavior in his/her decisions and actions	3.62	A/H
4. Is honest and can be trusted to tell the truth	3.73	A/H
5. Insists on doing what is fair and ethical, even when it is not easy	3.68	A/H
6. Talks about the importance of honesty and integrity	3.70	A/H

7.	Can be trusted to carry out promises and commitments.	3.74	A/H
8.	Holds members accountable for violating ethical practices in their work	3.71	A
Composite Mean		*3.71*	***A/H***

*Source***:** *Yukl, et al. (2013)*

Legend:

4.21-5.00	*Strongly Agree/Very High*
3.41-4.20	*Agree/High*
2.61-3.40	*Somewhat Agree/Moderate*
1.81-2.60	*Disagree/Low*
1.00-1.80	*Strongly Disagree/Very Low*

Based on the data in the table, it reveals that as a whole, the ethical leadership of administrators obtained a composite mean rating of 3.71, which means high (agree). It indicates that, as a whole, the ethical leadership of administrators is moderate, neither very high nor very low. Even when indicators are considered separately, all items received the same high mean rating. The employees agree that the administrators showed a strong concern for ethical values (3.75), communicated ethical standards to members (3.73), are honest and trusted (3.73), set example ethical behavior for employees (3.62), talked about the importance of honesty and integrity (3.70), insisted on doing what is right and fair (3.68) and held members accountable for violating ethical standards (3.71). High ethical leadership means that the administrators possess moral character and exercise moral behavior and ethical decision-making that a leader demonstrates using role modeling, communication, and reinforcement to motivate others to make ethical decisions and behave according to the relevant moral values, norms, and rules (Jackson & Lasthuizen, 2023; Malik et al., 2022; Li et al., 2023; Li, 2024; Pakizekho, Barkhordari, & Sharifabad, 2022)

Problem 2: What is the level of employees' perception of the treatment in terms of

- ***workers' rights,***
- ***Respect in the workplace,***
- ***Workplace relationship?***

Table 2: Level of employees' perception of the treatment in terms of workers' rights

Indicators	**Mean**	**DR**
1. Security of tenure is followed	3.38	SWA/M
2. Employees feel secure when they are already employed	3.21	SWA/M
3. The offices are comfortable enough to work in	3.45	A/H
4. Employees are allowed to participate in decision-making through their representatives	3.04	SWA/M
5. Management listens to the ideas of employees through their representatives	2.91	SWA/M
6. Salary is given according to the rank and job grade	3.19	SWA/M
7. Salaries are beyond the minimum wage	3.18	SWA/M
8. Employees' problems are solved through due process	2.92	SWA/M
9. The employees' freedom of expression is protected	3.02	SWA/M
10. The employees are allowed to organize themselves	3.21	SWA/M
Composite Mean	3.15	**M**

Source: Abun, et al. (2020).

Reading the data in the table, it demonstrates that as a whole, the employees' perception of the treatment in terms of workers' rights gained a composite mean rating of 3.15, which is considered moderate (somewhat agree). This rating indicates that employee treatment regarding workers' rights is moderate, neither very high nor very low. Even when the indicators are taken separately, they are all rated within the same level of mean rating, which is moderate. The employees moderately agree that security of tenure was followed to a moderate extent (3.38), security of tenure was respected (3.21), allowed to participate in decision-making (3.04), listened to by the management (2.91), salaries according to job grade or rank (3.19), following minimum wage (3.18), problems were settled through due process (3.92), protection of freedom of expression (3.02) and allowed to organize themselves (3.21). Moderate employee treatment means that management has not fully practiced fair and

respectful treatment toward employees, respected diversity and inclusivity in decision-making, and afforded employees equal opportunity. In short, the management has not fully treated employees with Dignity and respect (Roberts, 2014; Forssell et al., 2025; Bhoir & Sinha, 2024).

T*able 3: Level of employees' perception of the treatment in terms of respect in the workplace*

Indicators	Mean	DR
1. I feel valued in my institution	3.45	A/H
2. All employees have equal access to professional development and training opportunities.	3.02	SWA/M
3. The management treats employees with respect.	3.23	SWA/M
4. The behavior of the management toward the employees is appropriate and does not make fun of the employees	3.30	SWA/M
5. The management typically welcomes ideas from employees who have different views, opinions, and experiences from theirs	3.13	SWA/M
6. The management can work with employees coming from different backgrounds.	3.26	SWA/M
7. The management can openly discuss any concerns with the employees	3.14	SWA/M
8. Our employees are promoted based on their skills, abilities, and experience, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other unique characteristics	3.34	SWA/M
9. The management would forgive the honest mistakes of employees	3.40	SWA/M
10. Overall, our institution is a respectful place to work	3.47	A/H
Composite Mean	3.27	**SWA/M**

Source: Abun, et al (2020)

Concerning employee treatment in terms of respect in the workplace, the data reveals that as a whole, it received a composite mean rating of 3.27, which means moderate (somewhat agree). Such a rating suggests that employee treatment regarding respect in the workplace is moderate, neither very high nor very low. Taking the indicators separately, all were rated within the same level of mean rating, which is moderate. The employees moderately agree that their boss valued them and have equal access to professional development and training (3.02), treated respectfully (3.23), received appropriate treatment (3.30), could express ideas (3.13), and the management welcome cooperation (3.26), opens to ideas from employees (3.14), promotes employees based on merits (3.34), and welcome honest mistakes (3.47). Moderate respect in the workplace means the management has not fully demonstrated respect for its employees by upholding their Dignity, privacy, and equal opportunity. It demonstrates a lack of respectful communication and fair treatment, which are crucial for employees' well-being and organizational success (Arnold, 2025; Sayer, 2007; McCarthy et al., 2017; Cropanzano et al., 2007).

T*able 4: Level of employees' perception of the treatment in terms of workplace relationship*

Indicators	Mean	DR
1. The management provides support to employees who are overworked or experiencing difficulties.	3.09	SWA.M
2. The management looks after the welfare of the employees	3.16	SWA/M
3. The management is very considerate of employees and respects their abilities and willingness to learn	3.17	SWA/M
4. The management helps employees who have particular problems to overcome	3.18	SWA/M
5. The management respects employees' limitations and tries to help when they ask	3.16	SWA/M
6. People feel understood and accepted by the management	3.14	SWA/M
7. Employees can openly discuss and share their ideas with the management	3.11	SWA/M

8.	The employees can talk openly to the management about their difficulties because they believe that the management will listen	3.07	SWA/M
9.	Employees believe that if they share ideas and task-related problems, their management will listen and respond constructively	3.11	SWA/M
10.	The management and employees trust each other as coworkers.	3.19	SWA/M
Composite Mean		3.14	**SWA/M**

Source: Abun, et al. (2020)

Based on the data in the table, it appears that as a whole, the employee treatment, along with workplace relationship, obtained a composite mean rating of 3.14, which is considered moderate (somewhat agree). Such a rating suggests that employee treatment concerning workplace relationships is not very high or low, but relatively moderate. Even when the indicators are taken singly, all were evaluated within the same level of mean rating, which is moderate. The employees somewhat agree or moderately agree that their supervisors offered help when they had problems (3.09), looked after their welfare (3.16), recognized employees' abilities and willingness to learn (3.17), helped employees who problems (3.18) and accepted their limitations (3.16), discussed and shared ideas (3.11), listened to the employees (3.07), and employees and management trust each other (3.19). A moderate workplace relationship indicates that management has not fully established a conducive workplace relationship, characterized by a lack of support and care for employees, respect, acceptance, openness, and trust between both parties. Good workplace relationships can foster a positive work environment, increase productivity, and contribute to a sense of belonging and job satisfaction (Betzler & Löschke, 2021; Zaugg et al., 2001; Cleveland & Cavanagh, 2015; Sypniewska et al., 2023).

Table 5: Summary of employees' perception of the treatment

Indicators		**Mean**	**DR**
1	*Workers' rights*	3.15	Moderate
2	*Respect in the workplace*	3.27	Moderate
3	*Workplace relationship*	3.14	Moderate
Overall Mean		**3.19**	**Moderate**

According to the data in the table, the overall mean rating for employees' perception of treatment is 3.19, indicating a moderate level of agreement (somewhat agree). Such a rating implies that overall employee treatment, along with workers' rights, respect in the workplace, and workplace relationships, is not very high or very low, but relatively moderate. Such a rating indicates a need for the institution to improve its treatment of employees. Good employee treatment means focusing on employee well-being, diversity, and ethical conduct, which includes fair treatment, respect, and commitment to a safe and inclusive workplace environment. It also means prioritizing employee development, fair compensation, and equal opportunities for career growth (Spence, 2017; Bhoir & Sinha, 2024; Liu et al., 2024).

Problem 3: What is the level of employees' organizational commitment in terms of:

- ***Affective commitment***
- ***Continuance commitment***
- ***Normative commitment?***

Table 6: Level of employees' organizational commitment in terms of affective commitment

Indicators	**Mean**	**DR**
1. I would be thrilled to spend the rest of my career in this organization	3.39	SWA/M
2. I feel as if this organization's problems are my own	3.28	SWA/M
3. I feel like 'part of my family at this organization	3.44	A/H
4. I feel emotionally attached to this organization	3.39	SWA/H
5. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	3.51	A/H
6. I feel a strong sense of belonging to this organization	3.48	A/H
Composite Mean	3.42	**A/H**

Source: Allen and Meyer (1997).

Concerning organizational commitment, the data in the table reveal that, as a whole, the affective commitment of the employees obtained a composite mean of 3.42, which is regarded as high (agree). Such a rating indicates that the overall organizational commitment, along with affective commitment, is moderate, neither very high nor very low. However, when the items are taken separately, three indicators are rated within the same level mean range, which is moderate in terms of their happiness and willingness to spend their life with the institution (3.39), self-identification with the institution (3.28), and feeling emotionally attached to the institution (3.39). Meanwhile, the employees agree that they looked at the institution as part of their family (3.44), and have a great deal of personal meaning to them (3.51) and a sense of belonging (3.48). High affective commitment means employees have a strong emotional attachment, identification, and involvement with the institution. They are more likely to feel a sense of belonging and loyalty, leading them to be more engaged, productive, and committed to staying with the institution long-term (Berthelsen et al., 2017; Fantahun et al., 2023; Sam-Mensah et al., 2025; Meyer & Allen, 1984, 1991).

Table 7: Level of employees' organizational commitment in terms of continuance commitment

Indicators	Mean	DR
1. It would be tough for me to leave my job at this organization right now, even if I wanted to	3.34	SWA/M
2. Too much of my life would be disrupted if I left my organization	3.26	SWA/M
3. Right now, staying with my job at this organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire	3.44	A/H
4. I believe I have too few options to consider leaving this organization	3.34	SWA/M
5. One of the few negative consequences of leaving my job at this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives elsewhere.	3.28	SWA/M
6. One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice	3.35	SWA/M
Composite Mean	3.34	**SWA/M**

Source: Allen and Meyer (1997).

As indicated by the data in the table, the overall organizational commitment, specifically in terms of continuance commitment, received a composite mean rating of 3.34, which is considered moderate (somewhat agree). It suggests that organizational commitment regarding continuance commitment is moderate, neither very high nor very low. Even if the indicators are taken separately, all were rated at the same level of mean rating, which is moderate. The employees moderately agree that it is currently not easy to leave their job, even if they wanted to (3.34), as doing so would cause too much disruption (3.26). Thus, at the moment, staying with the institution is a matter of necessity (3.44) because of the few options available out there (3.34), and it would require personal sacrifice if I leave (3.35). Continuance commitment refers to the decision by employees to stay with the institution due to the perceived cost of leaving, rather than a positive emotional attachment. It is essentially a "staying because you have to attitude, and it is often driven by factors like financial security, lack of alternative job options, or investment already made in the current position (Mueller, et al. 2020, Nazneen, 2017, San-Martin, et al., 2020, Taing, et al. 2010).

Table 8: Level of employees' organizational commitment in terms of Normative commitment

Indicators	Mean	DR
1. I must remain with my organization.	3.38	SWA/M
2. Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave.	3.47	A/H
3. I would feel guilty if I left this organization now	3.32	SWA/M
4. This organization deserves my loyalty	3.46	A/H
5. I would not leave my organization right now because of my sense of obligation to it	3.53	A/H
6. I owe a great deal to this organization.	3.62	A/H
Composite Mean	3.46	**A/H**

Source: Allen and Meyer (1997).

Based on the data in the table, it shows that as a whole, organizational commitment of the employees in terms of normative commitment gained a composite mean rating of 3.46, which is considered high (agree). It implies that, as a whole, the normative commitment of the employees is neither very high nor very low, but relatively moderate. However, when the indicators are taken separately, there were two items rated within the same level of mean rating, indicating a somewhat agree or moderate level of agreement. Currently, employees generally agree or moderately agree that they should remain with the organization (3.38) and feel guilty about leaving the institution (3.32). However, the employees seem to agree that even if it is to their advantage to leave the institution, however they did not feel right to leave (3.47) because they also agree that the institution deserves their loyalty (3.53) and because of their obligation (3.53) and thus, they owe a great deal to the institution (3.62). High normative commitment means that the employees feel a moral obligation to stay with the institution. It is a sense that leaving would be wrong or a breach of loyalty, stemming from internalized values and a belief in the organization's goals and values. This contrasts with affective commitment and continuance commitment (Mueller, et al. 2024, Battistelli, et al. 2006, Inam, et al. 2021, Chatzi, et al. 2025).

Table 9: ***Summary of employees' organizational commitment***

Indicators		**Mean**	**DR**
1	*Affective commitment*	3.42	High
2	*Continuance commitment*	3.34	Moderate
3	*Normative commitment*	3.46	High
Overall Mean		**3.41**	**High**

In summary, the data in the table demonstrates that overall, the employees' organizational commitment obtained an overall mean rating of 3.41, which is high. It means that the overall organizational commitment of the employees is relatively low. Taking the dimensions separately, it indicates that only two dimensions are rated within the same level of mean rating, which is high, namely affective and normative commitment, and one dimension is rated moderate, namely continuance commitment. High organizational commitment means that overall, the employees identify with and are dedicated to their institution. It reflects a strong sense of loyalty, a willingness to contribute to the organization's success, and an intention to remain employees of the organization (Ran & Zhou, 2023; Jex & Britt, 2014; Meyer & Allen, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Problem 4: Is there a relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment?
Table 10: Relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment

Organizational Commitment	**Pearson's r**	**Interpretation**	**p-value/ Significance**	**Decision (Ha)**
Ethical Leadership	0.026	+Weak Relationship	0.741/Not Significant	Not Supported

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001
Source: SPSS

The correlational result reveals that ethical *leadership* had no significant influence on organizational commitment (r = -0.026, $p < 0.741$); thus, the *hypothesis is not supported.* Such a finding suggests that high ethical leadership does not necessarily cause an increase or decrease in the organizational commitment of the employees. The high organizational commitment of the employees can be caused by other factors like job satisfaction, organizational culture, or rewards (Guibin, 2025; Kanchana, 2012; Noor-Faezah, et al., 2024; Mesner, 2013; Mishardian, et al., 2024; Wang, et al., 2017).

Problem 5: Is there a relationship between employee treatment and organizational commitment?
Table 11: Relationship between employee treatment and organizational commitment

Organizational Commitment	**Pearson's r**	**Interpretation**	**p-value/ Significance**	**Decision (Ha)**
Employee Treatment As a Whole	0.04	+Weak Relationship	0.616/Not Significant	Not Supported

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001
Source: SPSS

The correlational result reveals that *employee treatment* had no significant influence on organizational commitment (r = -0.04, $p < 0.616$); thus, the *hypothesis is not supported.* The results indicate that the high or moderate organizational commitment of the employees is not a direct effect of employee treatment. A moderate level of employee treatment is not a

primary predictor of organizational commitment, nor is a high level of organizational commitment associated with treatment. Thus, the cause of high organizational commitment can be influenced by other organizational factors like job satisfaction and organizational culture (Guibin, 2025; Kanchana, 2012; Noor-Faezah et al., 2024; Mesner, 2013).

Results and discussion

The study examined the influence of ethical leadership and employee treatment on employees' organizational commitment. Statistical results showed that ethical leadership among administrators was high and employee treatment was moderate, while organizational commitment was also high. However, Pearson r correlation analysis indicated that neither ethical leadership nor employee treatment was significantly associated with organizational commitment. This suggests that the high level of commitment among employees is not solely due to ethical leadership or treatment, implying that other organizational factors may be driving commitment levels.

These findings led to several management, practical, and theoretical implications. From a management standpoint, increasing organizational commitment may require focusing on other drivers such as job satisfaction, work-life balance, career development, recognition, and employee development opportunities (Figueiredo et al., 2025; Yunita et al., 2023; Samsudin et al., 2024). These factors are interrelated and significantly affect employee well-being, which in turn influences their commitment. They enhance employees' sense of value, engagement, and loyalty to the organization, which ultimately impacts retention (Sypniewska et al., 2023; Hammond et al., 2023; Jianchun, 2024). The findings also suggest the need for context-specific leadership approaches rather than a one-size-fits-all model. Institutions may need to explore leadership styles that foster commitment, such as a humanistic approach. Humanistic leadership—which emphasizes empathy, respect, and ethical concern—promotes a supportive environment where employees feel valued and invested in organizational success (Rogers, 1951/2021; Sen, 2001; Nussbaum, 2011; Huijser & Nullens, 2024).

There is a need for more nuanced, context-sensitive leadership models. The study underscores that leadership effectiveness depends on situational and organizational factors (Benmira & Agboola, 2020; Oc, 2017; Villoria, 2023). Future research may consider alternative theoretical lenses such as stewardship theory or complexity theory to better understand organizational commitment. Complexity theory posits that multiple interacting elements can generate emergent behaviors that cannot be predicted from individual variables alone (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015; Turner & Baker, 2019).

The lack of correlation between employee treatment and organizational commitment reinforces the notion that commitment is driven by a broader range of organizational factors. Practically, this means institutions may need to revisit HR strategies and widen their focus to include aspects like organizational culture, employee engagement, and career growth. Commitment-building strategies should be tailored to the institution's unique context and employees' specific needs. This adaptive approach acknowledges that a uniform strategy is insufficient and highlights the importance of understanding the distinctive dynamics within a workplace (Li et al., 2025; Bah et al., 2024; Einhorn et al., 2024; Loor-Zambrano et al., 2022; Aggerholm et al., 2011; App et al., 2012; Kolesnicov, 2018).

The results also highlight a limitation: organizational commitment should not be examined using only a few variables like ethical leadership and employee treatment. Future research should explore additional factors such as organizational culture, leadership styles, employee motivations, and institutional context.

Conclusion

The study investigated the impact of ethical leadership and employee treatment on employees' organizational commitment. Ethical leadership was rated high, employee treatment moderate, and organizational commitment high. Despite this, correlation results revealed no significant relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment, nor between employee treatment and organizational commitment. Thus, high organizational commitment appears to be influenced by other variables not included in the study. The study's hypothesis is therefore rejected. Further research is needed to incorporate additional organizational factors that may better explain the development of employee commitment.

Author's contribution: Conceptualization: D.A. M.J.E. J.M.B. Methodology: D.A. M.J.E. Data Collection: W.M.C. M.E.N. J.M.B. Data Analysis: D.A. M.J.E.

Ethical declaration: The study ensured no violation of ethical standards. The study did not involve or violate human rights and collected the data through ethical procedures.

Funding: The study was funded by the authors

Conflict of interest statement: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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